



Interactive Map Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the ConnectingALABAMA project and why were these maps developed?

A:

In early 2009, the United States Congress passed legislation providing grant funding for the development of a national map of broadband availability. The State Broadband Data & Development Program (SBDD) was developed by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) to distribute grant funding toward that goal. In 2009, the LinkAMERICA Alliance was chosen by the Alabama Broadband Initiative (ALBI), an initiative sponsored by Governor Riley's office, to manage Alabama's SBDD activities. ALBI, through the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) was awarded approximately \$1.8 million to execute the first two years of data collection and broadband mapping and planning activities. The state was granted an additional \$2.97 million in September 2010 to fund project years 3-5. Each state was required to develop its own statewide broadband availability map using a portion of those funds.

Q: Why is it necessary to map where service exists?

A:

Broadband mapping is an important first step from a couple of perspectives. First and foremost, developing detailed service maps is a great way to organize and conduct a comprehensive inventory of service (by technology type) across the entire state with a spotlight on where there are un-served or under-served areas. This core information helps to focus policymakers, community leaders, service providers and others on the central issue at hand: where is the existing digital divide and how can we best close that gap?

The service maps are also an excellent first step in engaging all providers across the state in a joint effort to identify and solve an issue that is far larger than any one of them. The ConnectingALABAMA approach takes great care to develop the maps in a way that protects the valuable business information of the service providers.

Perhaps the most important use of the information and maps is to help consumers understand what broadband options are available to them.

Q: ...but don't service providers know where the gaps are?

A:

This is a complicated question. In many ways, the most important 'gap' is really a product of what a consumer wants and when they want it. On one level, a service provider certainly knows where they put equipment and the service territory that equipment can address. But they likely don't know much about the areas in which they do not have broadband service deployed. If you think about this across dozens of providers, it becomes even harder for any individual broadband provider to know where service doesn't exist at all.

On a second level, consider that equipment is placed to satisfy an area's estimated demand. What happens from a demand perspective within that area will change over time. So for a wireline provider,

